

I can imagine no louder warning against the expansion of offshore drilling than the eighteen thousand gallons of oil that just went pouring into the Delta National Wildlife Refuge in Louisiana. Coming just days after the President's announcement and while the Florida legislator prepares an expansion program of its own, the spill is an undeniable repudiation to any claims that the oil industry's technology, equipment and safety measures are sufficient to prevent and contain the risks of their business.

Drilling off the coasts of Florida is a real threat to the state's environment and economy, offers very little potential reward and therefore is dangerously nonsensical. It is no longer some abstract threat to remote wildlife and environmental interests but a genuine danger hanging over the state's citizens.

The harm and consequences from a spill off Florida's coasts could reach beyond wild animals and strike our tourism and fishing industries- the heart of Florida's economy. By threatening our key businesses, expanded drilling puts the people of Florida on a path of devastation similar to the animals in the Delta refuge. Given the across-the-board injuries to Florida that would result from an oil spill, even a slight risk is too great. We are fortunate that it is not too late to learn from the mistakes of the present.

Expanding offshore drilling does nothing to further the development of sustainable energy. It has little benefit to the state and to the country while the minimal increase in the global oil supply has zero effect on the price paid by consumers. I'm amazed by folks who can consider the plight of the Delta Wildlife Refuge and still claim more drilling is justified and warranted.

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